

*National Geographic's 'Into the Great Pyramid':
"A Forensic Investigation of the Greatest Heist and Fraud
in the Twenty-First Century"*

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Rediscovering the Egyptian Legacy (REL)
Series of Investigations

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Abstract

On September 17, 2002, millions around the globe gathered round their TV sets in anticipation of the TV Program “Pyramids Live: Secret Chambers Revealed”, a mission of National Geographic. Something went wrong that necessitates this forensic investigation.

I record my great appreciation to a dear friend, the late Mr. Mostafa Abdel-Kader Eissa, ex-Chief of Antiquities Conservation and Restoration Dept., SCA, for directing me to the project of Rudolf Gantenbrink/GAI. Mr. Eissa has been appointed as project supervisor (fig. 1). The knowledge gathered from Gantenbrink website, together with other sources, respecting the air-shafts of the Great Pyramid have been of a major help.



Fig. 1 The Cheops Project

In 1991, Rudolf Gantenbrink, a German engineer, and Dr. Rainer Stadelmann, director of the German Archaeological Institute, agreed to conduct a joint venture aimed to investigate the air shafts of Cheops Pyramid. It was agreed that Gantenbrink would handle the technical preparations of the project and GAI would secure all the necessary permits in Egypt. The mission started on March 1992 and ended on March 1993. During that period, Gantenbrink used two robots of his own design by the names Upuaut-I and Upuaut-II, both equipped with video cameras. Number of video footage have been timely discussed and shared by GAI and Zahi Hawass, director of Giza Plateau Inspectorate at that time. The story of Gantenbrink/GAI and the Egyptian Antiquities Organization, later known by Supreme Council of Antiquities (SCA), is lengthy and somewhat intricate.

What concerns us in this context is Gantenbrink statement that reads: March 22nd, 1993, I send Upuaut-2 back up the shaft to the step at 53 meters. Finally, on the third attempt, the robot clears the hurdle and can proceed. The next six meters of the shaft show a gradual improvement in the quality of workmanship. At 59 meters, Upuaut-2 approaches a stone slab, which blocks the shaft. Further, Gantenbrink said, today we make a more thorough video inspection of that marvelous slab. Subsequently it has come to be known, perhaps unfortunately, as “The Door.” This popular name of course implies that the slab actually serves the function of a door, leading to – well, who knows what? But until we can peer behind it, or perhaps even open it, we will never know for sure what it really is and what it meant to the builders of Cheops. So, for the time being, it might be more appropriate to refer to it simply as the “USO” – the Unidentified Stone Object. Since that time, the “USO” has been identified as “Gantenbrink Door.”

On July 10, 2001, National Geographic News announced the appointment of Zahi Hawass as Society’s newest Explorer-in-Residence. In his interview with Susan Roesgen, co-anchor of National Geographic Today, Hawass said “In this sense it was the pyramids that built Egypt, rather than the other way around,” and added ‘This is in my heart’. I am the *guardian* of the pyramids. That’s why I like people to call me ‘Mr. Pyramid.’ ⁽¹⁾ Early in 2002, Hawass has been promoted to the position of Secretary

General, The Supreme Council of Antiquities. It was the long-awaited opportunity. Hawass, having the footage of Gantenbrink explorations of 1992/1993, convinced his American employer, National Geographic (NatGeo), of an expedition to explore what is behind “Gantenbrink Door”. An agreement signed for a live program. The two parties of the agreement have been “Hawass and Hawass” or “NatGeo and NatGeo” where SCA, a department of Ministry of Culture, has been absent except for letterheads. Here are excerpts of the statements made by Hawass:

National Geographic designed a robot and called it the Pyramid Rover, and *the Permanent Committee of the SCA* acknowledged the project as an Egyptian endeavor. ⁽²⁾

National Geographic arranged a *promotional tour* around the world for Egyptologist Mark Lehner and myself to familiarize more people about facts known, and unknown, about the Great Pyramid (fig. 2). Due to my busy schedule and office obligations, I was able only to go to Hong Kong and Singapore. During my two-day trip in the Far East, I met more than 30 TV and newspaper representatives and realized the extent to which the idea of live TV coverage had captured attention and fostered interest. Wherever I went I saw posters and advertisements promoting the event: “Open National Geographic channel on your TV and see Ancient Egypt: Secret Chamber Revealed.” ⁽³⁾

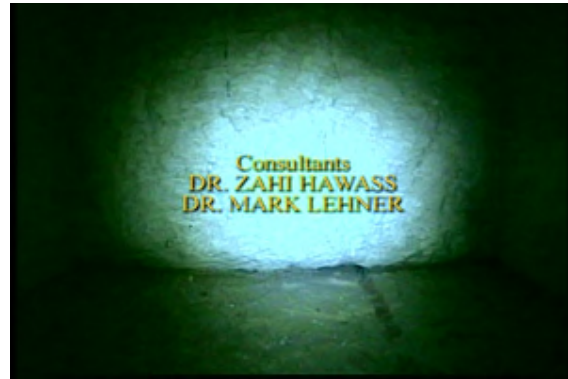


Fig. 2 Consultants

Nine years after Gantenbrink project, NatGeo announced its TV Program “Pyramids Live: Secret Chambers Revealed” for airing on September 17, 2002. I watched the program till the early hours of the morning and a shocking surprise has been waiting. After the show, Hawass said: “One day before the show, we found out by ultrasonic that the door in the southern shaft of the Great Pyramid is about six centimeters thick, which implied that there was something behind that door. We *decided* to drill a three-millimeter diameter hole in the door so we could send a camera behind it. In the last minute of the show, the camera was sent in, and I saw the second door 32 cm. behind the first door.”

1. Investigating Gantenbrink Door I

Gantenbrink Door

It is known since 1993 that the door is equipped by two metal handles, the right one is intact and complete while the left one is short, its lower part is missing (fig. 3). Gantenbrink said, the left fitting is broken off about halfway up. The broken piece slid down the shaft to the end of Block No. 27, where it still lies (fig. 4).



Fig. 3 Gantenbrink door

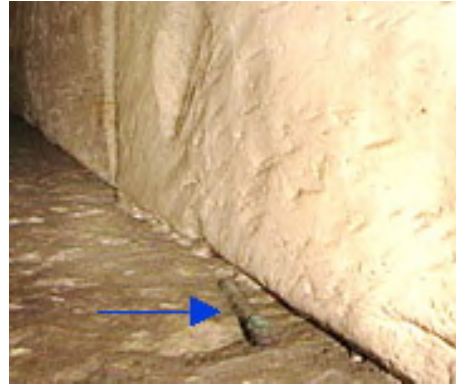


Fig. 4 The missing piece of the left handle

Frames of Drilling

The shocking surprise is here investigated as shown on NatGeo DVD. Certainly, there was no Secret Chambers to reveal as publicly advertised that is why they decided on the title “Into the Great PYRAMID” for the DVD released on March 4, 2003.

(Fig. 5)

Pyramid Rover, equipped with the drill, approaches the Door. Here is the shocking surprise. The right handle is seen shortened to the level of the left one, its lower part disappeared.



(Fig. 6)

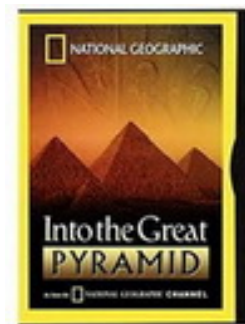
Drilling



(Fig. 7)
Drilling completed, the hole is seen
and the robot retreats.



The frames prove that the drilling has been later than damaging the right handle. At which stage the incidence did happen? NatGeo DVD is the conclusive evidence. (Fig. 8)



(Fig. 9)
The robot, mounted by certain tools, approaches
the door. The right handle is seen intact.



(Fig. 10)
An interrupting frame



(Fig. 11)

The next frame, lower part of the right handle is sheared.



In the DVD, the three frames have been sequential in a fraction of a second. What happened during the interrupting frame is a mystery.

I am trying to figure out what is mounted on the robot (fig. 12). If the main unit at front is the ultrasonic detector which has been used to gauge the thickness of the slab, then there are auxiliary tools being attached to the detector to accomplish two jobs in a single run. The auxiliary fitting is of triangular shape and from several snapshots, it is remotely controlled to tilt either horizontally or vertically and, as well, raising and lowering. By directing the head of the triangular that is equipped by a miniaturized cutting disk (?) and a suction vacuum (?), it was possible for the operator to cut the metal handle and it is for the vacuum to suck the cut piece or for a mounted magnet to capture it. Gazing at the lower end of the present right handle, we can tell it is a very neat cut which proves it has been deliberately and professionally sheared.

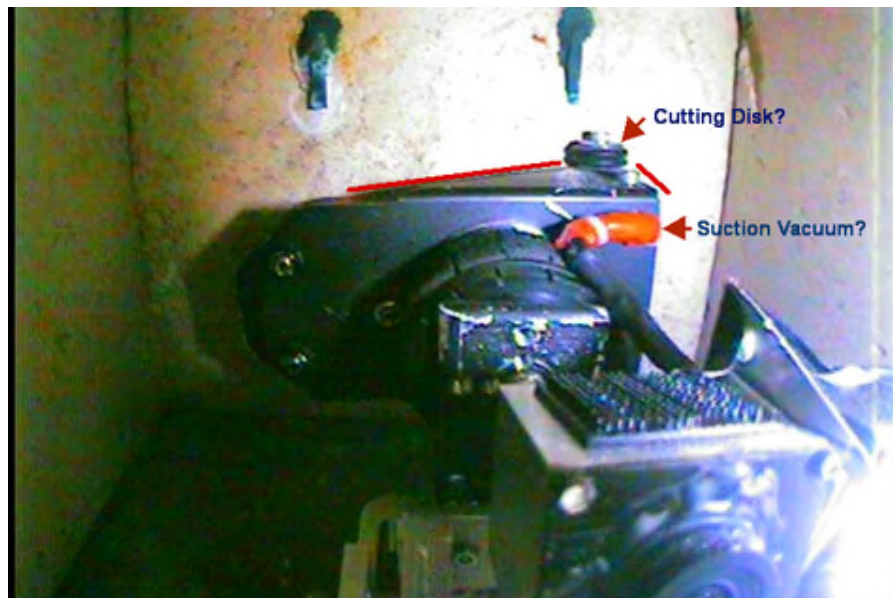


Fig. 12 Tools mounted on the Robot

It was strange not to hear a word or comment on the incidence from National Geographic or Hawass or the Permanent Committee of SCA or the giant sphere of Egyptology. Comments and expressions of discomfort and disturbance came only from Egyptophiles.

Quoting from: <http://slashdot.org/comments.pl?sid=40092&cid=4274926>

something strange about the “door” they drilled...

by [Holgrave \(129674\)](#) on Tuesday September 17, @01:29PM (#4274926)

Did anyone else notice anything odd about the “door” they drilled through? Maybe it was my imagination, but I swear on the one they drilled through it looked like the handles were both the same size. Yet I’ve always noticed whenever a picture of the door is shown that the handle on the right is significantly longer than the one on the left. Doesn’t that seem a bit fishy?

Re: something strange about the “door” they drilled

by [markb \(6556\)](#) on Wednesday September 18, @07:02PM (#4285603)

Yes, I did notice this. I’m surprised nobody else did. In one part of the show, there’s a prerecorded bit with the robot approaching the “Door” with its sonar attachment. The right “handle” is long. They then cut to something else, and then back to the video of the robot inching closer to the door (still with the Sonar attachment) and the “handle” is short.

Theory: The robot broke the “handle” while applying pressure to the “door” with the sonar attachment. From the previous expedition, the other “handle” appears to once have been longer, but also broke off at one point. The broken off piece is visible in one of the pictures here [cheops.org]. It’s too bad they did not explain what happened. I prefer TV that doesn’t insult my intelligence.

And, quoting from: Guardian’s Ancient Egypt Discussion Board

Richard Stribling

New member

Username: srib

Post Number: 1

Registered: 09-2002

Posted From: 208.234.80.193

Posted on Wednesday, October 02, 2002 - 12:48 am:

In reviewing the tape of the drilling of the hole in the ‘door’ I noticed that the right ‘handle’ was now about the same length of the one on the left. I assume that it had been removed for analysis. Is this true and if so will there be, or has there been, an analysis done?

Posted on Wednesday, October 02, 2002 - 09:36 am:

I thought that it broke off during the drilling... so much for Zahi’s concerns of ‘damaging’ the pyramid! On the same train of thought, did anyone even notice the damage done to the shaft when the Pyramid Rover slid all the way down after trying to climb the little step halfway up the shaft?? (That was in the first test run I think). Now THAT’S what I call Damage!

/ck

Posted on Wednesday, October 02, 2002 - 11:14 am:

Janine Williams
New member
Username: janine

Post Number: 45
Registered: 09-2002
Posted From: 66.26.228.164

Christian: That copper handle is over 4650 yrs. old! It was also narrower at the end (possibly as a 'guide' through the holes). If it were corroded, a touch or two by the robot or even the vibrations from the drill may have accidentally shaken off the tip. Why bash Zahi? He always considers the safety of the monument first.

In his article titled "Unlocking the Past" in Cornell Engineering Magazine, Summer 2003, Jay Wrolstad wrote: The Pyramid Rover, a creation of Cornell alumnus Mike Bassett and his team, is about to uncover secrets hidden from view since the era when the Pharaohs ruled Egypt more than 4,000 years ago. As part of a collaborative effort between National Geographic and Egypt's Supreme Council of Antiquities, the robotic vehicle delivered live video of the exploration from deep inside the massive stone monument. The one-of-a-kind mechanical marvel was designed and built by Bassett and his colleagues at Boston-based iRobot Corp., which was asked by National Geographic to produce a small, multi-function vehicle that could crawl through the long, narrow passage. "We were asked to find that door, videotape what we found, and determine what, if anything, lay beyond the blocking stone," Bassett says. Bassett and his iRobot team accepted the challenge, built themselves a replica of the shaft, and completed preliminary design and construction of the Pyramid Rover in a matter of weeks. "We got the assignment last April [2002] and had the robot in Egypt by July. It was an engineering feat and an organizational feat," says Bassett. In addition to its unique traction system, Bassett's robot packs a surprising amount of high-tech gear for a device that's only about a foot long. The cargo includes lights, video equipment, an echo impactor thickness gauge, and a drill, *among other next-generation archeological tools (?)*. "The idea was to carry modular payloads; the drill alone weighed almost five pounds," says Bassett, who controlled the robot using a fiber optic cable as a tether and a computer "brain" to deliver specific instructions for each of the tasks at hand. "I was very eager to go to the Great Pyramid and look inside," Bassett says. "I saw things no one had seen in 4,000 years; it was a once in a lifetime opportunity." And thanks to the high-tech capabilities of Pyramid Rover, millions of people around the world shared that moment of discovery.

It was iRobot's team headed by Mike Bassett who technically maneuvered the robot "Pyramid Rover" in its journeys inside the Great Pyramid (fig. 13). Teaming with National Geographic in such an exceptional mission should have been a great opportunity to build on in the world of innovation; an opportunity that has been *decidedly* wasted by Bassett, why? There is only two iRobot Press Releases in year 2002, the first dated Sep. 18, 2002, the day following the event of "Pyramids Live". ⁽⁶⁾

Sep 18, 2002

iRobot Introduces Roomba™ Intelligent FloorVac - The First Automatic Floor Cleaner In The U.S.

... Launches New Consumer Robotics Division To Bring Benefits of Advanced Navigation Technology To The Home. iRobot Corporation, a leading developer of robotic technology products, today unveiled Roomba™ Intelligent FloorVac -- the first automatic floor vac available in the U.S. Roomba™ Intelligent...

Nov 19, 2002

The Hottest Gift Item This Year is for Grown Ups; iRobot, s Roomba™ - Intelligent Floorvac Sweeps Them Off Their Feet.

Practical Gifts That Save Time and Simplify Life Top Adults' Wish Lists

This year, one of the hottest holiday gift ideas isn't a toy for kids - it's a robot for grown-ups called Roomba™, the new intelligent floor vac from iRobot that cleans floors all by itself, ...



Fig. 13 iRobot Team

2. Investigating Pizza Door III

On March 23, 1993, Gantenbrink said, we use the rest of the day to continue our investigation of the lower northern shaft. I send the robot up to the metal rod we have seen before, then farther along the rod until we reach a *sharp bend at 18 meters*. At the end of Block No. 9, the shaft angles about 45° to the West. I leave it at that point and extract the robot from the shaft. Upuaut-2 was not yet capable of negotiating the sharp westward bend of the shaft. Nonetheless, the robot's camera provided us an initial view of the continuing shaft (fig. 14).

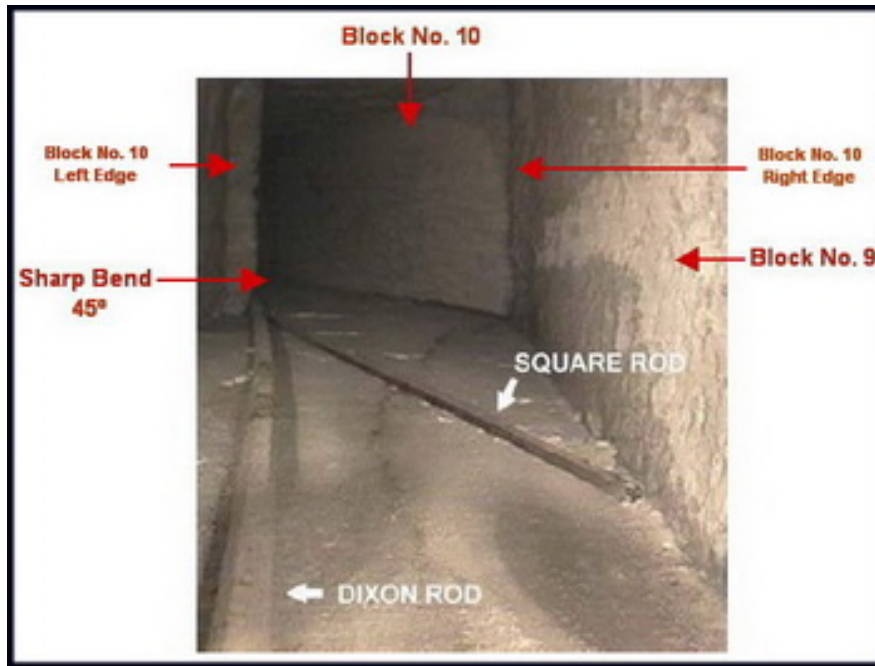


Fig. 14 Queen Chamber - Northern Shaft - Annotation
original after Gantenbrink

The sharp bend is shown in (fig. 15). The robot (fig. 16) would never has the ability to maneuver the sharp bend as reflected unless it was designed by serpentine body

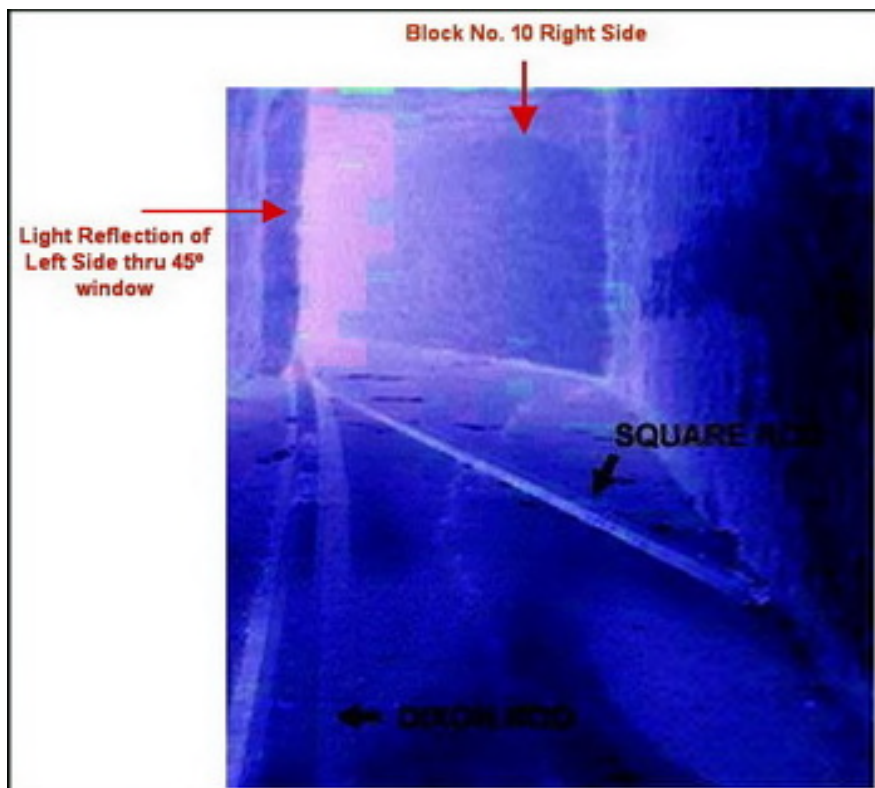


Fig. 15 Negative Editing



Fig. 16 Robot Pyramid Rover

Six days after the live show, National Geographic News announced on September 23, 2002, Update: Third ‘Door’ found in Great Pyramid”, *Scientists(?)* exploring the Great Pyramid in Egypt sent a robot into the northern shaft in the past few days, discovering another blocking stone. The ‘door’ appears to be identical to the one in the southern shaft that was already known. The doors are equidistant (65 meters/209 feet) from the queen’s chamber. It is the third such block discovered within the shafts of the pyramid. The announcement of the discovery was made Monday by Farouk Hosni, Egypt’s minister of culture, and Zahi Hawass, secretary general of Egypt’s Supreme Council of Antiquities and a National Geographic explorer-in-residence. ⁽⁴⁾ With the editorial, NatGeo published a combined picture (fig. 17). The upper part is the door allegedly found in the northern shaft of Queen chamber (Door III). The lower part is the Gantenbrink door found in the southern shaft of the chamber (Door I). It is supposed that the two doors have been shot by the same fiber-optic camera of robot rover; yet, Door III is differentiated by horizontal lines. Also of notice, there is sort of inscription or scratches on the lower section of that door.

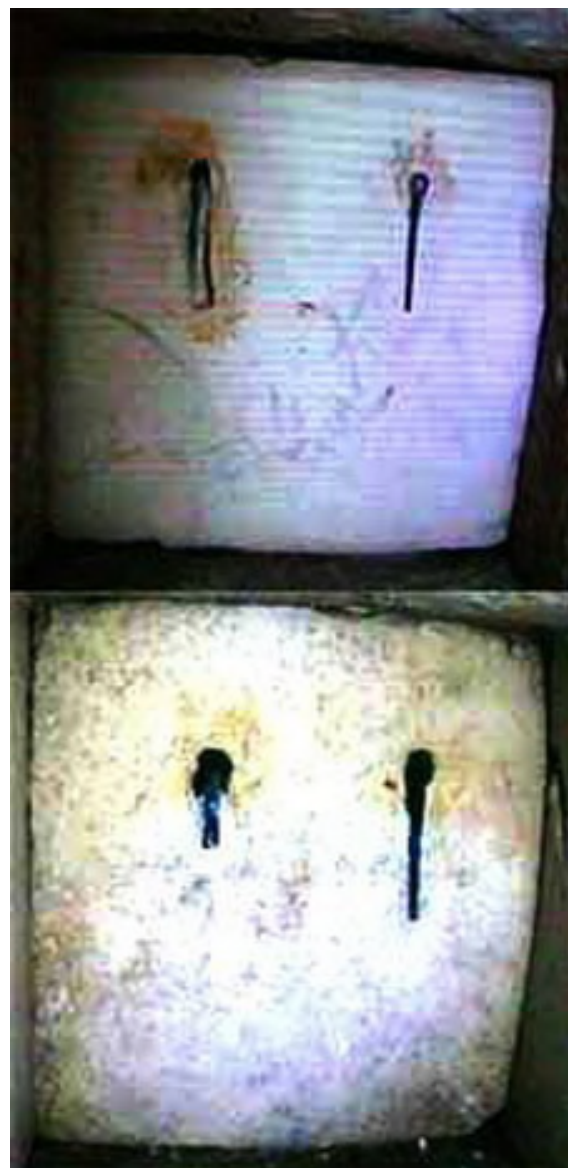


Fig. 17 combined picture

In (fig. 18), the horizontal lines are exclusively for the slab and not for the surrounding area.



Fig. 18 Surroundings

In (fig. 19), same picture in negative editing. The horizontal lines are delineated.

In (fig 20) the same picture is metalized by editing. Stone texture is visible for the lower Door I of the southern shaft while the upper Door III of the northern shaft is free of texture which raises the question of the material made of. The inscription or scratches are visible just under the handles.

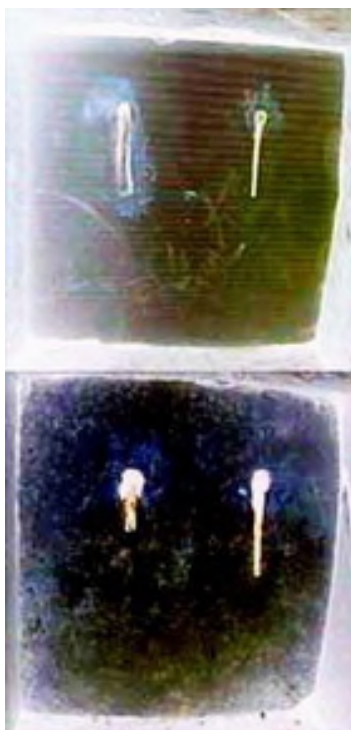


Fig. 19



Fig. 20

By using simple graphics software (2005), it was possible to reduce grain or noise or black dots in a picture to the required level. The original picture of (fig. 17) has been subjected to gradual despeckle for us to judge the firmness of the metal handles of both doors.

Despeckle 25 steps (fig. 21):

In upper Door III, the right handle completely vanished. The left one still visible; only because this area is stained as seen in the original. In lower Door I, both handles are visible but smoothed

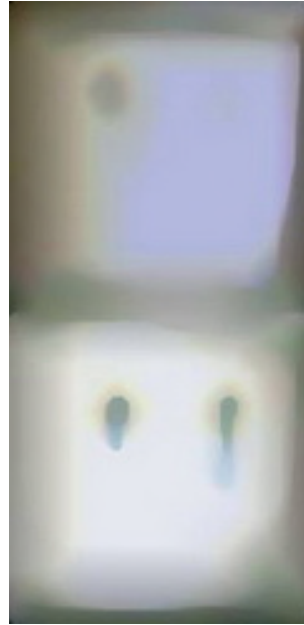


Fig. 21 Despeckle 25 steps

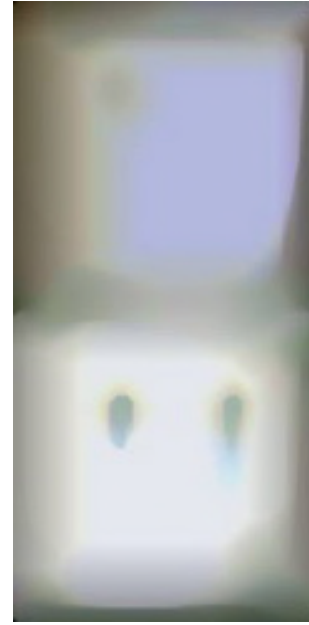


Fig. 22 Despeckle 30 steps

Despeckle 30 steps (fig. 22):

The left handle of upper Door III is faint while the handles of lower Door I are still visible with more degree of smoothness.

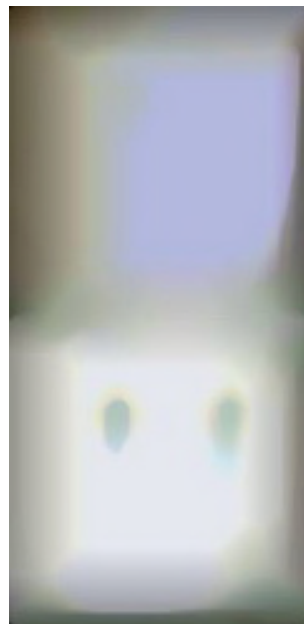


Fig. 23 Despeckle 35 steps

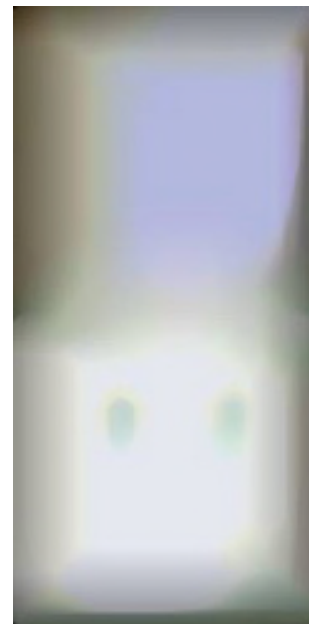


Fig. 24 Despeckle 40 steps

Despeckle 35 steps (Fig. 23): there is no trace of the handles of upper Door III, those of lower Door I are still visible.

Despeckle 40 steps (Fig. 24): The handles of lower Door I are still visible and would sustain more despeckle steps.

The Despeckle test proves the handles of Door III are either a graphic paint or most likely a hand-paint of black ink, meaning fake handles in contrast to the genuine metal handles of door I.

Gantenbrink wrote: As we approach the slab, we can see two dark streaks on it, which upon closer inspection turn out to be copper fittings. And there is something else. The face of the inspector sitting next to me at the monitor has become chalk white. He draws my attention to two round white marks on the copper fittings. “These are seals, these are seals!” he exclaims, visibly shaken. “We must stop work immediately and inform our chairman.” The excitement in the Queen’s Chamber is palpable. For a

variety of reasons, we know we have discovered something of great significance (fig. 25). From the picture released by NatGeo for the door III of the northern shaft (fig. 26), there is no trace of seals.

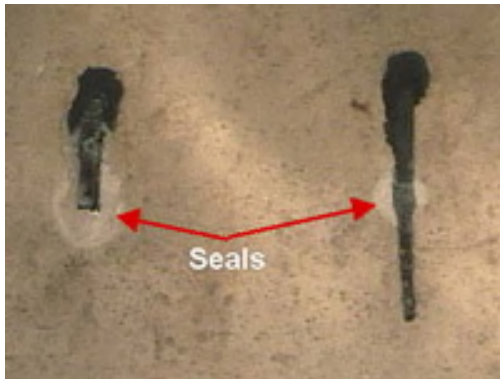


Fig. 25 Door I Seals



Fig. 26 Door III no seals

From the digitally flipped crop of the lower half of upper Door III (fig. 27), we realize that what would seem as inscriptions are not Hieroglyphs or Hebrew or any other language; it is the scribbles made on a *Pizza Box* (made of corrugated cardboard) by someone of National Geographic staff who must have been under the stress of committing a fraudulent action. The right handle of upper Door III has taken the shape of the drawing seen in red rectangle as a look-alike needle.

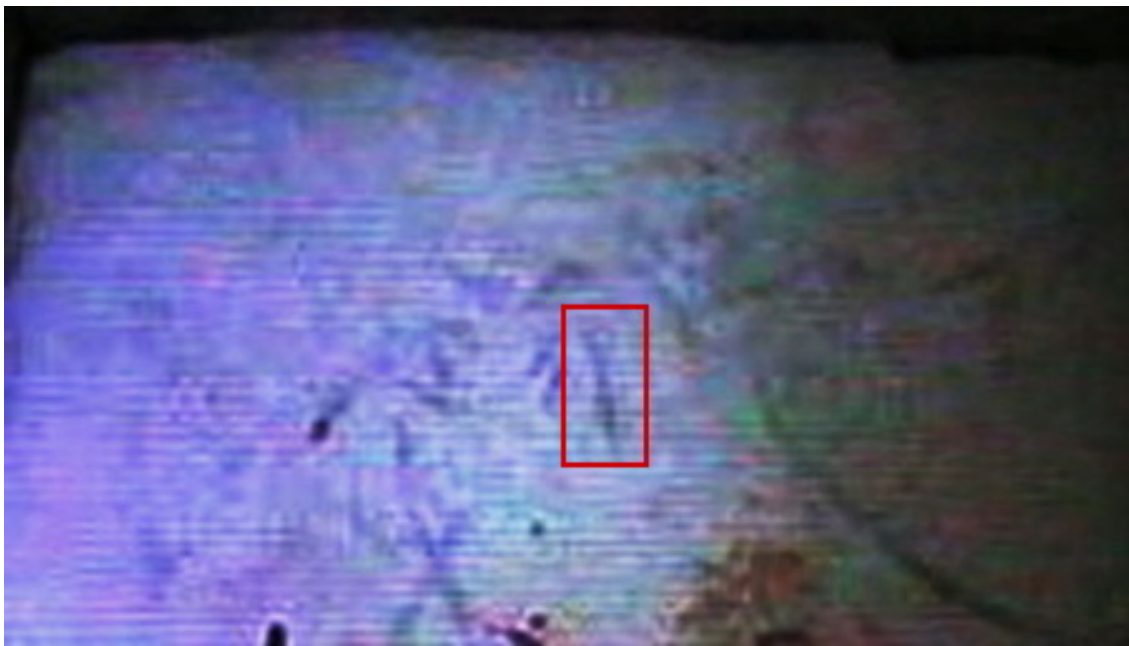


Fig. 27

The see-through of *The Eye of the Needle* (fig. 28) betrayed the forger. It is not a handle, nor it is fixed to the allegedly slab.

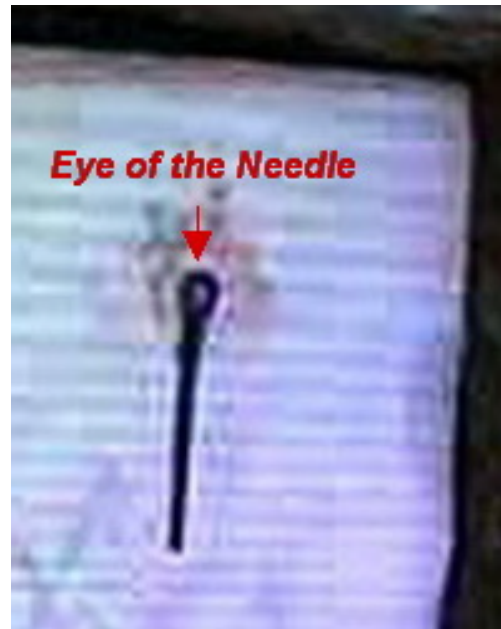


Fig. 28



Fig. 29 Mission successfully completed. Zahi Hawass and Laura Greene

It is said ‘they always come back to the crime scene.’ A decade after the incidents, Hawass started a series of articles, in Arabic, on Alakhbar newspaper, reminding the Egyptians of his *successful* mission of ‘Pyramids Live 2002.’ Forensics proved the metal piece has been sheared and snatched in a premeditated heist while the *Pizza Door* fraud has been a cover-up. National Geographic was not acting in good faith.

From the timeline of the Egyptian history, the Great Pyramid falls in circa 2500 B.C., the Bronze age, meaning the metal fixtures found in the southern shaft of Queen chamber must have been of Bronze alloy. For benefit of whom and for what reason the metal piece has been deliberately snatched?

Under subtitle “WHY, WHEN AND BY WHOM WAS THE GREAT PYRAMID BUILT?”, Russell, in 1908, said: The first work of importance on the subject, proving that the Great Pyramid possessed scientific features, was by Mr. John Taylor, of England, A. D. 1859, since which time the attention of many able minds has been given to the further study of the testimony of this wonderful “Witness”; especially since Prof. Piazzzi Smyth, Astronomer-Royal for Scotland, visited it, for several months made its peculiarities a study and gave to the world the remarkable facts of its construction and measurements,

and his conclusions therefrom. To his scholarly and scientific work, “Our Inheritance in the Great Pyramid,” we are mainly indebted for the data made use of in this chapter. A few years after Prof. Smyth’s return, came the suggestion that the Great Pyramid is Jehovah’s “Witness”, and that it is as important a witness to divine truth as to natural science. This was a new thought to Prof. Smyth, as well as to others. The suggestion came from a young Scotsman, Robert Menzies, who, when studying the scientific teachings of the Great Pyramid, discovered that prophetic and chronological teachings co-exist in it. The Great Pyramid proves to be a storehouse of important truth—scientific, historic and prophetic—and its testimony is found to be in perfect accord with the Bible, expressing the prominent features of its truths in beautiful and fitting symbols. It is by no means an addition to the written revelation: that revelation is complete and perfect, and needs no addition. But it is a strong corroborative witness to God’s plan; and few students can carefully examine it, marking the harmony of its testimony with that of the written Word, without feeling impressed that its construction was planned and directed by the same divine wisdom. If it was built under God’s direction, to be one of his witnesses to men, we might reasonably expect some allusion to it in the written Word of God. And yet, since it was evidently a part of God’s purpose to keep secret, until the Time of the End, features of the plan of which it gives testimony, we should expect that any reference to it in the Scriptures would be, as it is, somewhat under cover—to be recognized only when due to be understood. Isaiah testifies of an altar and pillar in the land of Egypt, which “shall be for a sign and for a witness unto the Lord of hosts in the land of Egypt.” And the context shows that it shall be a witness in the day when the great Savior and Deliverer shall come to break the chains of oppression and to set at liberty Sin’s captives—of which things our Lord preached at his first advent, (Luke 4:18.). The scope of this prophecy is but dimly seen, however, until Egypt is recognized as a symbol or type of the world of mankind, full of vain philosophies, which only darken their understandings, but ignorant of the true light. As Israel typified the world which shall be delivered from the bondage of Sin by the great antitype of Moses, and whose sin—offering has been given by the antitype of Aaron, so Egypt represents the empire of Sin, the dominion of death (Heb. 2 :14), which for so long has held in chains of slavery many who will be glad to go forth to serve the Lord under the leadership of one like unto but greater than Moses.—Acts 3:22, 23. We see that this storehouse of knowledge, like the major part of the Bible store, was kept purposely sealed until its testimony should be needed and appreciated. Does this imply that its great Architect knew that a time would come when its testimony would be necessary? in other words, that a time would come when God’s written Word would be lightly esteemed, and even his very existence questioned? when human philosophy, under the name of science, would be lauded, and every proposition subjected to its tests? Has God decided to prove himself and his wisdom by those very tests? So it would appear. This structure will yet confound the wisdom of the wise as a “Witness” for the Lord of hosts “IN THAT DAY which is already begun.” ⁽⁷⁾

The scientific analysis of the metal piece must have been a disappointment for the believers of the Jewish historian Josephus, who said: “that when as time had extinguished the memory of the benefits of Joseph, the kingdom of Egypt being transplanted into another family, they used the Israelites with much severity, wasting them with several labors; for they were commanded to cut channels for the river (Nilus,) to raise walls, and cast up banks, whereby to hinder the inundation of the stream: they oppressed also our nation with those fabrics of the Pyramid; compelling them to learn many (mechanical) arts, and inured them to the supporting of labors.” As well, for the fans of Piazzzi Smith, 1864, who said: “The Great Pyramid in Egypt and not of Egypt” and “the Great Pyramid is Jehovah’s “Witness”, along with all the devotees of “Bible in Stone”. The analysis must have proved the metal piece is neither of bronze alloy, nor of iron but of meteoric iron. Magnifying the current lower end of the right handle fig. 11, its color is the same as the meteoric iron of fig. 30.



Fig. 30 Meteoric Iron after ipfs.io

My book “OUR ROOTS IN THE GREAT PYRAMID” is the answer for determining the age of the “meteoric iron.” It has been there at the time of *walling* (fortifying – curtaining) the *Holy Mountain*, 26000 years B.C., (fig. 31), and the time of the four theatres that have been hollowed out in its core to embody Rostau, Djedu, Tribunal of Rostau, and Ark of Thoth (fig. 32).

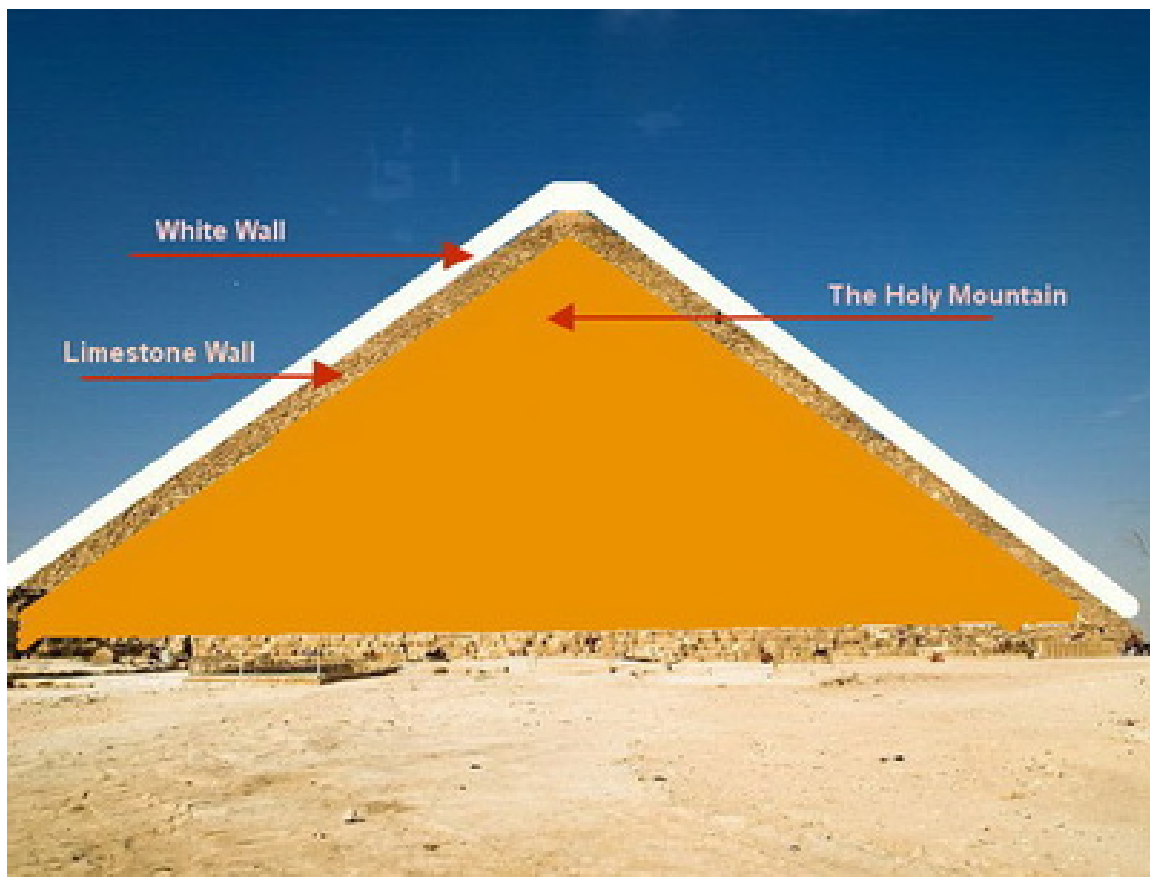


Fig. 31 The Holy Mountain – veiled.

Pyramid texts read:

“The newly deceased son speaks: *O you of the Great Curtain, O you of the Great West, you beings of the Broad Hall*, I speak before you. I See that father of mine, that attendant of mine, that guardian of

mine, that champion of mine, that one to whom I have descended, him who is in the West, him who is in the realm of the dead. He has announced me to the Tribunal, he has said that your utterance will fetch me, for my days have been brought to an end in this land of the living in which I was. ⁽⁸⁾

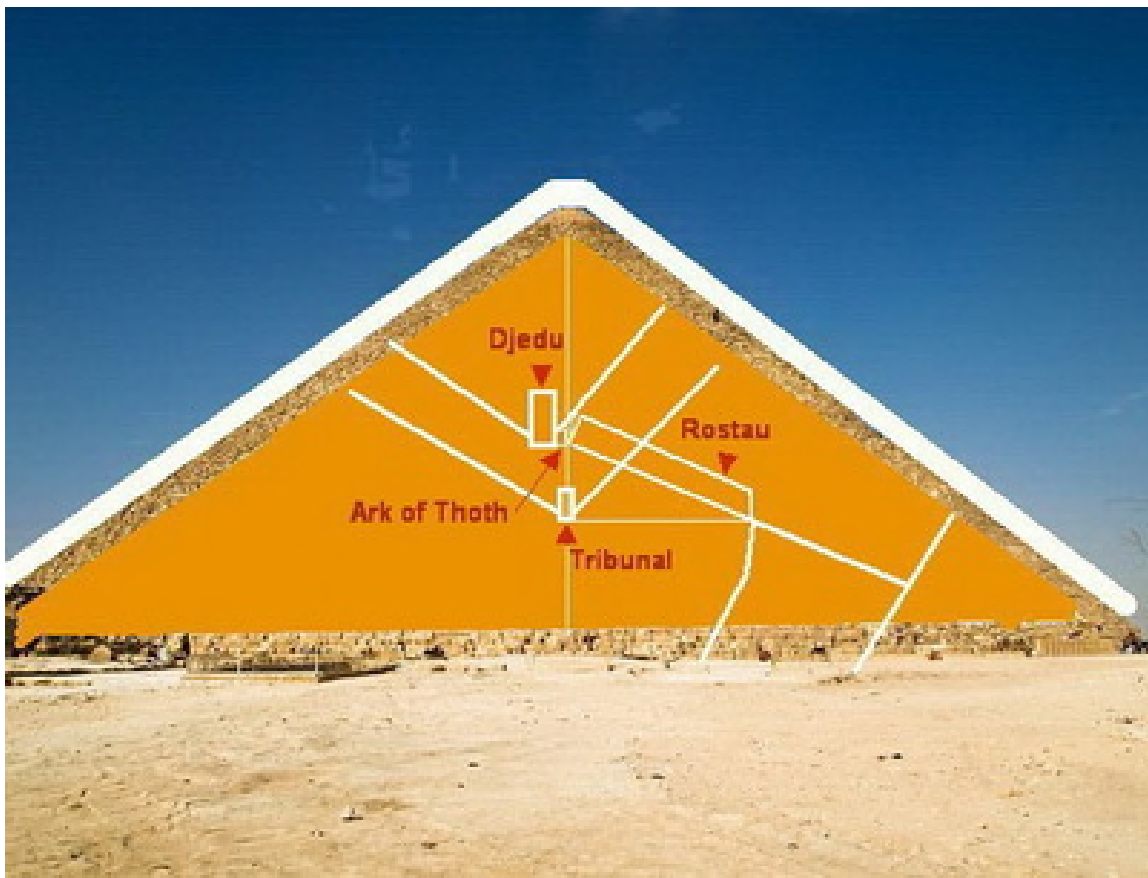


Fig. 32 Theatres of the Holy Mountain

We are not talking anymore of the fictitious Great Pyramid but of the most sacred monument on Earth, “*The Holy Mountain of Our Parents, Adam and Eve*,” that is why this forensic investigation is exhibited to the worldwide public opinion.

Speaking of National Geographic and Zahi Hawass, I refer to David Usborne article published on October 28, 2013, “US investigates National Geographic over ‘corrupt payments’ to Egypt’s keeper of antiquities,” (copy attached). As well, to the article titled “Zahi Hawass: National Geographic’s Baksheesh Boy?”, published on same day, (copy attached).

Endnotes

1. http://news.nationalgeographic.com/news/2001/07/0710_zahiinterview.html
2. http://www.guardians.net/hawass/articles/secret_doors_inside_the_great_pyramid.htm
3. http://www.guardians.net/hawass/articles/Dig_Days-Promoting%20Pyramid%20Secrets.htm
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US investigates National Geographic over 'corrupt payments' to Egypt's keeper of antiquities

David Usborne | @dusborne | Monday 28 October 2013 20:04 |



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of the world's most respected educational and scientific institutions and reports that it is under investigation in the United States over its ties to a former Egyptian official who for years held the keys to his country's many popular antiquities.

At issue is whether the Washington-based organisation, which in recent years has rapidly extended its public reach beyond its well-known glossy magazine to a cable television channel and other enterprises, violated strict US laws on payments to officials of foreign governments in contracts starting in 2001 with Dr Zahi Hawass, who, until the overthrow of President Hosni Mubarak, was the government's sole gatekeeper to all things ancient Egypt.

For a decade, Dr Hawass seemingly played a critical role in giving National Geographic constant access to the antiquities, including the pyramids and Tutankhamun treasures which because of their popularity with the public became a lynchpin of its expansion. Fees for those services, which according to the Vocativ news web site ranged from \$80,000 (£50,000) to \$200,000 a year, could be interpreted under US law as illegal bribes.

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investigation,” Peter Carr, a spokesman with the Justice Department Criminal Division, told The Independent.



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In a separate statement, a spokesperson for the National Geographic, said: “The National Geographic Society has complied with all applicable laws and acted appropriately with respect to its relationship with Dr Zahi Hawass and the government of Egypt.”

Dr Hawass was likewise indignant. “No one can bribe me,” he told Vocativ. “I’m the most famous Egyptologist.”

Dr Hawass, who lost his perch as protector of his country’s ancient treasures after the first Egyptian uprising and fall of Mubarak, signed successive deals with National Geographic that named him an “explorer-in-residence”. The deal gradually made him a celebrity with armchair archaeology fans in America and wherever National Geographic TV is shown.

contract. It was not a bribe. **I gave no single favour to National Geographic.”**

Any US investigation will be focused less on any possible wrongdoing by him but rather by National Geographic, a charity that first began publishing its magazine with the familiar yellow borders in 1888, with particular reference to the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act which forbids US entities from paying bribes to foreign government to gain an unfair competitive advantage.

Companies targeted by the act recently have included WalMart, accused of paying illegal fees to officials in Mexico to speed the approval of building permits for its superstores.

The institution insists nothing was underhand in its dealings with Dr Hawass. “If there were requests made by governmental entities about our activities, we would co-operate fully and transparently,” a spokesperson told Vocativ.

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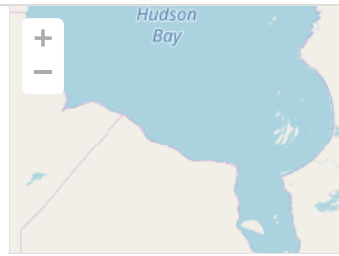
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30 10 '13 12:18 Zahi Hawass: National Geographic's Baksheesh Boy?

US investigates National Geographic over 'corrupt payments' to Egypt's former keeper of antiquities

National Geographic's reputation as one of the world's most respected educational and scientific institutions might face challenges as the nature of its ties with the notorious former Egyptian SCA secretary general Zahi Hawass are reportedly under serious investigation. The Washington-based organisation, is questioned on whether it violated strict US laws on payments to officials of foreign governments in contracts, starting in 2001 with Dr Zahi Hawass.

Till 2011, archaeologist Zahi Hawass was holding the keys to his country's many popular antiquities. Taking advantage of his position as the Head of Egyptian Antiquities and of his friendship with the then Minister of Culture Farouk Hosni as well as the First Lady Suzanne Mubarak, he was a self proclaimed sole gatekeeper to all things ancient Egypt, with nobody able to deny him this status. On the other side, National Geographic was rapidly extending its public reach beyond its well-known glossy magazine to a cable television channel and other enterprises, becoming the most well-known means of bridging the gap between research in archaeology (and other disciplines) and the wider public. But Hawass needed fame and National Geographic needed access to "fresh" finds from Egypt.

The rest is history. Zahi Hawass signed successive deals with National Geographic that named him an "explorer-in-residence". The deal gradually made him a celebrity with armchair archaeology fans in America and wherever National Geographic TV is shown. For a decade, Dr Hawass seemingly played a critical role in giving National Geographic constant access to the antiquities, including the pyramids and Tutankhamun treasures which because of their popularity with the public became a lynchpin of its expansion. Still, fees for those services, which according to the Vocativ news web site ranged from \$80,000 (£50,000) to \$200,000 a year, could be interpreted under US law as illegal bribes.

Any US investigation will be focused less on any possible wrongdoing by him but rather by National Geographic, a charity that first began publishing its magazine with the familiar yellow borders in 1888, with particular reference to the Foreign Corrupt Practices Act which forbids US entities from paying bribes to foreign government to gain an unfair competitive advantage. Companies targeted by the act recently have included WalMart, accused of

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The Justice Department declined to confirm the investigation. "As a matter of long-standing policy, we generally do not confirm nor deny whether a matter is under investigation," Peter Carr, a spokesman with the Justice Department Criminal Division, told The Independent. In a separate statement, a spokesperson for the National Geographic, said: "The National Geographic Society has complied with all applicable laws and acted appropriately with respect to its relationship with Dr Zahi Hawass and the government of Egypt."

Dr Hawass, who lost his perch as protector of his country's ancient treasures after the first Egyptian uprising and fall of Mubarak, was likewise indignant. "No one can bribe me," he told Vocativ. "I'm the most famous Egyptologist."

"When I became an 'explorer', I signed a contract to write books and make lectures," he insisted. "Based on the law, if you sign a contract to write books and make lectures, you have to get the government's approval, and I did!" He added: "It was a contract. It was not a bribe. I gave no single favour to National Geographic."

The institution insists nothing was underhand in its dealings with Dr Hawass. "If there were requests made by governmental entities about our activities, we would co-operate fully and transparently," a spokesperson told Vocativ.

NOTES

1. Independent, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/us-investigates-national-geographic-over-corrupt-payments-to-egypts-keeper-of-antiquities-8909454.html> (28/10/2013)

'Greeks' exhibition to open June 1 at National Geographic Museum in Washington, D.C.

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